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Routledge
2017

Green , S 2017 , When Infrastructures Fail : An Ethnographic Note in the Middle of an Aegean Crisis . in P Harvey , C B Jensen & A Morita (eds) , Infrastructures and Social Complexity : A Companion . , 20 , Culture, Economy and the Social , Routledge , London , pp. 271-283 .

http://hdl.handle.net/10138/232085

acceptedVersion

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Published in:

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2017 When infrastructures fail: an ethnographic note in the middle of an Aegean crisis. *In* Infrastructures and Social Complexity: a companion. P. Harvey, C. Bruun Jensen, and A. Morita, eds. Pp. 271-283. Culture, Economy and the Social (CRESC). London: Routledge.

The Aegean Sea region, that part of the north Mediterranean that divides Greece from Turkey, has three distinctive characteristics. The first is that it contains a double border structure: in addition to the state boundaries between Greece and Turkey, the region also contains a European Union border.[1] The second is that the Aegean is an archipelago: the sea is covered with a scatter of islands in between the mainlands of Greece and Turkey. And the third is that all but two of those islands are a part of Greece, even though many of them are physically located much closer to the Turkish mainland. There are a few islets (essentially large rocks) that belong to Turkey, but all but two of the sizable and inhabited islands belong to Greece. This has often caused disagreements between the Greek and Turkish governments about exactly where the line between the two countries is located within the sea and air. Given that international law stipulates that sovereignty is established from land and extends into the sea and air in a rather complex way (Acer 2003), the fact that there are so many Greek islands located just across the coast from Turkey has caused regular diplomatic and military episodes between the two countries (Green 2015).

The summer of 2015 in the Aegean was different from the usual pattern of a relatively calm tourist season occasionally disrupted by a minor dispute about territorial infringements. In 2015, the proximity of the Greek islands to the Turkish coast resulted

in a different dynamic that is still going on as this article is being written, and which has been reported regularly in the world's press and social media. It concerned a very large movement of people travelling through Turkey to the western Anatolian coast, in order to buy passage across the sea to one of the islands, from anyone willing to sell it to them, given that these travellers do not possess the right visas. Once they arrived on a Greek island, often in a state of exhaustion and shock from the trip, these travellers would claim asylum in the European Union.

This particular route into EU territory has in fact been used for quite a few years. This has particularly been the case ever since the mid-2000s, when conflicts in Iraq and later in other parts of the Arab world destabilised places to the east of Turkey, resulting every year in a steady number of people first fleeing to Turkey, and then, for some of them, taking the short but often dangerous trip to one of the shores of the Greek islands. However, the numbers taking that short sea trip were not that large, and although there were regular incidents in which drowning occurred, the clandestine transportation of people from Turkey to the Greek islands in the Aegean was mostly a concern of the EU and Greek state authorities, rather than a regular global news item (Green 2010). Yet the summer of 2015 was different: the sheer scale of the movement of people, the sheer numbers of deaths in the attempts to cross, and the fact that these people became increasingly vociferous, breaking the strange silence that seems to accompany asylum seekers under most circumstances (they are spoken about, and they are spoken to, but one rarely hears them speak for themselves, except in ethnographies), made it different.

On the Turkish side, and most especially in Izmir, the main city of the western Anatolian coast, there were enormous amounts of unusual activity as a result of this movement of people. Large numbers of strangers – men, women, children, often exhausted from days of walking, were moving around the city and countryside in

groups, waiting on street corners and in parks, buying bright orange life vests in preparation for making the short crossing to one of the Greek islands located just a few kilometres away: Kos, Chíos, Samos, Rhodes, Leros and, most of all, Lesvos, the island where I have carried out several years of research on the shifting relations between Greece and Turkey (Green 2008; Green 2010; Green 2013). On the Turkish side, this was not reported as a 'crisis,' but simply as an unusual phenomenon. Even when the famous image of the small Syrian boy lying drowned in the sand on the Turkish side was broadcast across the world and contributed to a major change in policy in Europe,[2] there was no sense that Turkey was experiencing a crisis. The boy was pictured being attended to by a Turkish police officer: the authorities were there, coping with a situation (see Fig 1). That's just what governments do; they handle emergencies and unexpected events when they occur. It was rather on side of the Greek islands that this very large movement of people, including those who drowned in the attempt to cross, was defined as a crisis. There were regular reports of authorities being 'overwhelmed' by the numbers of people arriving; pictures of locals, bare-chested, rescuing drowning people out of the sea (Fig 2)[3] and of overcrowded refugee camps unable to deal with the numbers that were arriving.[4]

There was more: this was Greece, whose government was in the deepest financial trouble of all the governments of the EU member states during the current period of such trouble for everyone. During the summer of 2015, this government appeared to be fighting for Greece's very survival in the Eurozone. And in July of 2015, the banks were closed. So it can be fairly said that basic infrastructure in Greece was failing. In contrast, Turkish infrastructures appeared work in an orderly fashion, even if there was a massive movement of people across its territory, and even if Turkey was itself dealing with hundreds of thousands, and these days millions, of refugees and had set up huge

camps at its northern and eastern land borders.[5] On the small Greek islands, part of a state that appeared to be going bankrupt, however, the infrastructure was regularly reported as buckling under the strain.

Appel, Anand and Gupta note that infrastructural failure is a fundamental and normal part of infrastructural dynamics: "infrastructural breakdowns saturate a particular politics of the present. As such, the material and political lives of infrastructure reveal fragile relations between people, things, and the institutions (both public and private) that seek to govern them" (Appel et al. 2015). Yet there are different levels and scales of breakdown, and

Fig 1. Aylan Kurdi's body being carried by a Turkish police officer in Bodrum, September 2, 2015. Photo: Reuters.

Fig 2. Antonis Deligiorgis saving Wegasi Nebiat on April 20th, 2015. Photo: Argiris Mantikos/AP

while the Turkish state has many such failures, what was happening on the Greek islands appeared to go beyond the normal, and into the category of serious structural failure. Indeed, the infrastructural troubles that Greece has been experiencing since 2009 might take that country into the category that Marianne Ferme (1998) terms the 'normally abnormal.' Ferme was referring to countries such as Sierra Leone, in which the failure of infrastructure was a basic element of the way things work. With the apparent collapse of infrastructure in mind, rather than any change in the people, many Greeks have suggested to me that their country was rapidly descending into 'third world' status. The descent concerned the material conditions, and in particular the infrastructural conditions, that make everyday life possible.

Yet this story of infrastructural failure being a sure sign of state failure bears a little more attention. One of its implications is that if a government does not have an efficient grip on its territory, then the state is not functioning properly. The key word here is 'territory,' within that term is embedded a particular definition of 'territory,' one that accords with certain modernist assumptions about the relationship between people, governance and land. Yet, as powerfully argued by Stuart Elden (2013) in *The Birth of Territory,* the concept of territory as it is commonly understood in contemporary political and social imagination has a particular history that is deeply bound up with

concepts of modernity. In Elden's words, "The idea of a territory as a bounded space under the control of a group of people, usually a state, is … historically produced" (2013: 322). This means that infrastructural control over such an entity could only be seen as a sign of state control, or its lack, once it is imagined that a territory is a coherent physical space that *ought* to be under the control of a single political and legal entity. What the media were depicting as occurring on the Greek islands, and in Greece more widely, was thus a general breakdown of what was imagined to be normal state functioning.

While a reasonable enough approach in legal terms, that particular understanding of territory draws attention away from the fact that all parts of the globe are interconnected, and that states are dependent upon other states in order to exist at all. That becomes obvious in studies of territories whose boundaries wind around one another to such a degree that it is hard to know, on the ground, in which state you are standing at any one time, as wonderfully described by Madeliene Reeves for the Ferghana Valley (Reeves 2014). Reeves also notes that this particular understanding of territory co-exists with other conceptualisations of space that would not carve up the world in those terms.[6] Elsewhere, this is particularly visible in infrastructural terms. Gas pipelines between Russia and Germany is an obvious case in point, but there are other, less obvious ones: both sides of Cyprus, despite decades of territorial dispute, share the same raw sewage network. While states do at times have control over certain aspects of their infrastructure -- and while they may at times feel so hostile towards the neighbours that they will build parallel systems rather than use the same infrastructures -- on many occasions, states have no choice but to share infrastructure.

The case of the Aegean in the summer of 2015 is an interesting case in point. Both the banking crisis and the refugee crisis on Lesvos involved infrastructural failures that were as much to do with Greek relations with other places and organizations as they

were to do with Greek infrastructural weaknesses. This is a rather obvious point, since transnational interests in Greece have become much more explicit in politics, economy and even discourse of Hellenism, than in many other countries (Ladas 1932; Clogg 1986; Herzfeld 1986; Fleming 1999; Hirschon 2003).

In spite of its importance, the particular understanding of territory that Elden examines, one that focuses on sovereign control over a coherent patch of the earth, draws attention away from what could be called the interweaving of territories and infrastructures. While the literature on globalisation has repeatedly demonstrated transnational interdependence (albeit quite weighted in favour of some powers than others), the way in which infrastructural failures become involved in this has not received equal attention.

In this chapter, my interest in infrastructure thus concerns the way in which they constitute both an interface and a route between places and peoples. This topic intrigues me, not least, as an anthropologist of border dynamics, for whom the ways in which places affect and even overlap with one another, and the social and cultural implications of these overlaps, has been a key focus (Green 2005; 2010; 2012; 2013). Originally, this chapter was going to be about Mediterranean trade routes and on how the movement of cargo could be used to trace both relations and separations between places in a way quite different from the kinds of relations and separations traceable by considering people's identities or movements. Using the same principle, infrastructure highlights the fact that location, seen as the relative position of a physical geographical space, always matters: *where* somewhere is located relative to other places has a great deal to do with the infrastructural arrangements made. The infrastructure in itself provides a material trace of the dense network of relations and separations between locations.

Yet while many studies have examined how infrastructure connects and transforms relations between people, states and places, they have less often focused on the ways in which infrastructure can create overlapping and interweaving sovereignty over territory (though see Reeves 2016 for an excellent exception). That aspect has perhaps been most intensely debated in recent years in terms of the European Union's potential encroachment on the sovereignty of its member states' (Barry 2001; Barry 2015), and in terms of globalisation (Dodd 1995; Sassen 1996; Brown 2010). Yet these debates tend to look at how states are losing their sovereignty to some other powers, either commercial or political. They thus retain the idea of a zero sum game: territory is an entity that is politically controlled (or not), rather than being something else, perhaps something like a variety of collaborations or alliances, mixed in with enmities and disconnections. This would redirect attention away from territory in terms of sovereignty, and towards the question of how infrastructure undergirds the 'workings' of location in practice. The rest of this paper offers an ethnographic example of this approach, taken from the summer of 2015 in the Aegean. As it makes clear, the failure of infrastructures makes acutely visible the overlaps, dependencies and separations between places.

A moment in the Aegean crisis: July 2015, Lesvos

On Sunday, 5th July 2015, I arrived for a short working visit to the island of Lesvos, less than 40km off the western coast of Turkey. I had been carrying out ethnographic research there on and off for years, but what brought me back for this short trip was a summer school, for which I had been asked to teach a course about the anthropology of borders.[7] Coincidentally, July 5th was the date of a snap referendum called by the Greek Prime Minister, Alexis Tsipras, just over a week earlier on June 27th. Tsipras had been in

government for five months, after his radical left coalition political party, Syriza, won the general election at the end of January 2015, on a strong 'anti-austerity' platform, replacing the right-leaning New Democracy.

It was gearing up to the height of the summer season on Lesvos, yet the beaches were relatively empty, as were the restaurants and hotels. People working in the tourist trade reported there had been scores of cancellations from tourists the previous week. Only the port in Mytilene, the capital of the island, was bustling with people that morning: the main ferry from Piraeus had just docked, and people, cars and cargo were streaming out. In addition to the tourists, there were Greeks returning to their home-town to vote in the referendum; there were also deliveries of supplies for the island. The port was also full of people who had arrived not with the ferry but from the Turkish shores, most of them picked up by the Greek coastguard as they tried to cross in small inflatable crafts, a pile of which was now gathering at the other end of the port, dumped there by the coastguard. By July 5th, between 800 and 1000 of these people – undocumented migrants, refugees, asylum seekers – call them what you will, were arriving daily on the island of Lesvos.[8] I did not know then that the daily number of arrivals would rise quite dramatically as the summer continued, only dropping a little as the weather turned colder and stormier into autumn. The authorities could not cope even in July; they could not process all these people, let alone find them adequate housing, resources, or any kind of decent conditions. Even after they had been extended and expanded earlier in the year the refugee camps had long ago been filled to overflowing. By July, there were as yet virtually no international agencies on the island. Somehow, even though the newspapers were reporting regularly on the issue, and particularly from Lesvos, there was no UNHCR,[9] no Médecins Sans Frontières, no Red Cross, and no politicians visiting daily to have their photographs taken near the packed

camps (all of these would eventually arrive, but it took several more weeks of dramatic photographs in the media; it was not until September that the image of the young Kurdish Syrian boy drowned on the shore of Bodrum would appear). There was just the Greek coast guard and navy, the merchant ships, occasional visits from Frontex (an EU Agency that helps to monitor the EU's external borders), the residents of the island, and the tourists.

On this morning, like every morning, a small percentage of these people were having their paperwork examined in preparation for transfer to Athens for further processing. A police bus full of applicants, with the glass of its back window missing, was waiting by the municipal swimming pool, a giant concrete dome built at the edge of the port during the 1967-74 period of military rule, right next to the town's municipal beach. That, along with some public toilets, was just about all that the town received in terms of new amenities from the military regime: Lesvos had a reputation for having been Communist-leaning. Still, it meant the town was not littered with the concrete monstrosities that the military regime was so fond of building in the late 1960s and early 1970s, as part of its material-imaginative expression of its relationship with infrastructure and modernity.[10]

Back at the port in July 2015, many of the applicants for transfer to Athens were on foot, crowding around the bus and the offices that were supposed to deal with their paperwork. Many blended in well with the tourists and others coming off the ship; others looked distinctly different. At that time, the majority arriving on Lesvos were Syrian citizens, having travelled through Turkey in the attempt to escape the increasingly violent and unstable political and economic Syrian conditions since 2011. Some estimates suggested that half of the country or more was under the control of ISIS/ISIL/Daesh at that moment. Many people feared for their lives – or the quality of

their lives – and wanted to get out. So here they were, some of them, waiting in the port in Mytilene.

The Syrians were not the only ones arriving. There were also people from Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, even Pakistan, and many other places. Many of those had been waiting months, perhaps years, in enormous Turkish refugee camps and elsewhere, at the edge of what used to be called 'Fortress Europe.' The policies of the European Union tried to change that reputation in the early 2000s, to encourage a more 'neighbourly' approach towards the countries just outside the EU's border. The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP for short) was originally drawn up in 2004 after the enlargement of the EU by 10 new member states. The policy was supposed to create a 'ring of friends' around the outer edges of the EU, in which mutual agreements and partnerships would be forged amongst those neighbours that were not EU member states. It now feels like it was from a different political era.

One aim at that time, at least at the highest political level, was to try to blur the distinction between the inside and outside of the EU (Delanty and Rumford 2005: 127). Yet for the people waiting outside the borders of EU states trying to get in, it felt like 'Fortress Europe' was not only alive and well, but had in fact strengthened. As others have noted (Kølvraa and Ifversen 2011), particularly since 2007, after Russia attacked Georgia, the policies dealing with the EU's outer borders have steadily involved ever-greater mechanisms for surveillance and control. By July 2015, the overall border management infrastructure of the EU region – the border controls, guards, regulations, surveillance and monitoring technologies, and so on – had expanded to such a degree that some have suggested that the effect (or perhaps, in part, the design) was to turn border management into a major and profitable industry (Andersson 2014; Brown 2010).

One indication is that Frontex was founded at the same time as the ENP was developed.[11] This was an EU border management agency whose purpose was to help EU member states manage the borders between EU and non-EU countries (Green 2010). Frontex had been carrying out operations in the Aegean since 2007. While there may have been special reasons why particular pressure was being put upon the EU's external borders in the summer of 2015 (namely, political turbulence in the Arab World), the inhibition of quick and legal routes to get into the EU had been put in place more than ten years ago through a mixture of infrastructural and juridical means. The consequence was that most people had little choice but to use illegal routes.

As the refugee crisis began gathering momentum, the Greek referendum held on July 5th had caused considerable annoyance to the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund (collectively known as the Eurogroup, or Troika), which were collectively trying to negotiate with the new Greek government about how to handle its public debt mountain.[12] The Eurogroup had been in talks with Prime Minister Tsipras and the then Greek finance minister, Yiannis Varoufakis, an academic economist specialized in game theory, about a new agreement with creditors to secure a third bailout package for Greece.

The talks had been going on for all five months of Tsipras's premiership without results. The Eurogroup had presented a series of conditions to be placed on the Greek government on June 25th, in exchange for arranging a third tranche of funds to keep Greece from going bankrupt as a result of the country's now five-year long financial crisis. These conditions were slightly modified on June 26th, but Tsipras walked out of the negotiations, announcing that most went directly against the policies for which he had been elected (i.e., in his view, the conditions would result in greater austerity, whereas he had promised anti-austerity policies). Tsipras then announced that he had to

call a referendum to ask the Greek people's opinion on whether or not these conditions were acceptable. What particularly annoyed the Eurogroup[13] was that Tsipras and Varoufakis went home and vigorously campaigned for the Greek people to vote 'no' in the referendum.

It was not, however, entirely clear what the Greek people were asked to vote for or against. The actual referendum question was 75 words long and referred to two official English language documents that were on the negotiating table in Brussels on June 25th, but which had not been officially translated into Greek.[14] Those conditions were in any case no longer on offer, as Tsipras had gone home. But if the question was no longer relevant, what was the referendum actually asking? The Eurogroup said the referendum was asking whether or not Greece still wanted to be part of the Eurozone, or return to the Greek drachma. Tsipras said it was about giving him, as Prime Minister, a stronger bargaining position in getting the best deal for Greece at the negotiating table. Nobody really knows what the voters thought was the issue.

In any case time was running out: repayments for previous bailout loans were rapidly coming due, and without further bailout funds, the Greek government would be unable to meet the deadlines. Moreover, the Greek banks were running out of money, as customers had been withdrawing their funds in quantities amounting to billions of euro weekly for months.[15] The upper limit of what the European Central Bank was willing to lend to Greek banks to maintain their liquidity was about to run out. In light of this, Tsipras announced that the Greek banks would be closed from June 29th until after the referendum. Customers were limited to €60 per day in withdrawals, with the exception of pensioners, who would receive a one-off €120 payment. Greek bank and credit cards ceased to work, as the banking system that processed all the exchanges were closed. Foreigners were still free to use cashpoint machines and credit cards, as they were

linked to foreign banks. However visitors to Greece were warned to take cash from abroad: businesses might be reluctant to accept cards, since their own banks were closed.

Tsipras and Varoufakis promised that on the following Tuesday, July 7th, the banks would reopen, but nobody really believed them. Actually, nobody knew what to believe anymore. The newspapers started a daily diet of photographs of people queuing at cashpoint machines in Greece; images of people lining up outside banks in the bright summer sunshine appeared globally. It became the symbol of the crisis: cash machines that no longer worked. Images of a distressed pensioner, a man, weeping on the floor of a bank, went viral.

On June 30th, the Greek government missed a deadline for a repayment to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the first time a developed country (whatever that means) had failed to meet an IMF repayment deadline. The Greek government had asked for a delay until after the referendum, but the IMF had refused; the director, Christine Lagarde, repeating her oft-quoted statement that the IMF never extends deadlines.[16] That was also the day the existing financial bailout to Greece expired. In the absence of a new agreement, the European Central Bank (ECB) announced that it would not extend or raise the cap on its emergency liquidity for the Greek banks, as the Greek government were in breach of their conditions by failing to repay the IMF, and effectively in default. Newspapers began reporting that without the ECB's help, the banks would run out of money, perhaps within a week. Varoufakis called the Eurogroup's actions 'terrorism': by refusing to keep the banks afloat until after the referendum, they had forced Varoufakis to close the banks, thereby making people so afraid of the consequences of going against the will of the Eurogroup that they would vote 'yes' in the referendum, rather than follow the advice of he and his prime minister.

In the event, 61.3% voted 'no' and 38.7% voted 'yes', with the votes in Lesvos almost precisely matching the national result. This was a shock result; everybody had expected it to be much closer, including the opinion pollsters; and many believed the vote would go the other way. Angela Merkel, Chancellor of Germany and one of the key members of the Eurogroup because Germany provides the lion share of credit to Greece, announced that Greece had lost her trust. The banks remained closed for more than three weeks, and capital controls are still in place as I write, in early 2016, even though they are a little more relaxed than during last July.

By July 5th, two key infrastructures on the island of Lesvos, the banking system and the management and processing of refugees to the island, were exhibiting fairly radical failures. And it was these infrastructural failures provided the most visible aspect of the extraordinary conditions in which Lesvos found itself on July 5th - the element that made the whole situation *feel* like a crisis. The media understood this as well as everybody else: they were obsessively taking pictures of people standing around in crowds waiting for some failing bit of infrastructure to deliver. Images of large crowds waiting in front of cash machines, and of the stalled processing of immigration documents, became images of systemic failure.

Conclusion

In July 2015, the people of Lesvos felt like they were in the middle of a perfect storm blowing onto their shores from elsewhere. The banking system was entirely dependent upon not only the European Central Bank, but also upon a dense network of mutually dependent transnational banking structures. And the refugee crisis had been generated through wars that occurred elsewhere. Moreover, the crisis attending the arrival of so many undocumented people on their shores was as much to do with EU border control

policies developed during the 2000s as it was to do with the island's meagre resources for coping with the overwhelming pressure.

These border control policies included the Dublin Regulation, which states that foreign nationals claiming asylum must be processed in the first EU country they enter, rather than being shared between the EU countries. That regulation had been written in a different time, when it was imagined that what needed to be controlled was the free movement of people through the Schengen area. Nobody had imagined a condition like the one on Lesvos in the summer of 2015, where the infrastructures could no longer deal with the numbers of people seeking shelter. What these ethnographic examples demonstrate is that, in the case of Greece that summer, the territory no longer matched that of a sovereign state. A great deal of what happened there, including the two infrastructural failures that made the headlines that summer (the Greek banking crisis and the refugee crisis), speak to an interweaving of widely different locations, territories and infrastructures.

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[1] Although Turkey is a candidate to join the EU (and has been for longer than any other state), it is currently located immediately outside the EU.

[2] http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/02/shocking-image-of-drowned-syrian-boy-shows-tragic-plight-of-refugees, last accessed 22.1.2016.

[3] http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/25/migrant-boat-crisis-the-sergeant-who-did-his-duty-towards-people-struggling-for-their-lives, last accessed 22.1.2016.

[4] I am deliberately not providing an example of such images.

[5] http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e48e0fa7f.html last accessed 22.1.2016

[6] See also Reeves (2016) , which discusses the political effort to give territory a coherence using infrastructural projects.

[7] See https://migbord2015.pns.aegean.gr/

[8] I prefer 'people,' which is admittedly less informative, but it is also less classificatory. See http://time.com/3947493/migrants-greece-lesbos-refugees-asylum/ and http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jul/08/greek-island-refugee-crisis-local-people-and-tourists-rally-round-migrants for a couple of stories on the issue.

[9] UN High Commission for Refugees

[10] The links between infrastructure projects and hubristic political regimes hardly needs reiterating here (Horn 1991; Bastéa 2000; Weizman 2007).

[11] http://frontex.europa.eu/about-frontex/origin/. See also van Houtum (2012) for a critical analysis of Frontex's mission.

[12] This was the Eurogroup, which was made up of the European Commission, European Central Bank, and the International Monetary Fund.

[13] Other than the fact that Tsipras and Varoufakis walked out of the negotiations just when the rest of the Eurogroup believed a deal was within reach (see http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-5270_en.htm)

[14] The referendum question (in Greek) was: "Must the agreement plan submitted by the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund to the Eurogroup of 25 June, 2015, and comprised of two parts which make up their joint proposal, be accepted? The first document is titled "reforms for the completion of the current programme and beyond" and the second "Preliminary debt sustainability analysis".

[15] See http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/02/16/us-greece-banks-deposits-idUSKBN0LK1HC20150216

[16] http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/04/imf-rules-greek-debt-repayment-extension-150417020543933.html